DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 173 292 SP 013 928

TITLE The Effects of an Orientation to Sociolinguistics on the Perceptions of Teaching Candidates.
PUB DATE 79
NOTE 15p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; Ethnic Groups; *Expectation; Negative Attitudes; Nonstandard Dialects; Social Attitudes; *Social Dialects; *Sociolinguistics; Stereotypes; Student Characteristics; Student Teacher Relationship; *Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Education

ABSTRACT

A report is given of an investigation examining the influence of student dialect and ethnicity on teachers' expectations of academic performance. The subjects of the study were secondary level teaching candidates enrolled in a generic methods course comprised of ethnically mixed learners. A control group of the teachers was given a course in sociolinguistics. The theme of this course was that language prejudices are socially based and, while dialect forms may be different, these dialects are functional in communication. Results of this investigation indicate that dialect has a significant effect on teaching candidate expectancy of learners' academic behavior. The candidates exposed to a course in sociolinguistics exhibited less biased attitudes than their counterparts. It is suggested that such courses be incorporated in teacher education programs. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED173292

The Effects of an Orientation to Sociolinguistics on the Perceptions of Teaching Candidates

Ranene Paulson Smith
Texas A&M University

Jon J. Denton
Texas A&M University

This investigation was conducted to examine the influence of learner dialect, learner ethnicity, and an orientation to sociolinguistic awareness on pre-service teacher expectations of learners' academic classroom performance. Analysis of the perceptions of 81 secondary level teaching candidates revealed significant effects of dialect ($F=5.58$, $p=.016$), ethnicity ($F=4.19$, $p=.016$), and treatment ($F=56.56$, $p<.01$) on the expectancies of teaching candidates. These results support the recommendation offered by linquists that instruction in sociolinguistics be included in teacher preparation programs.

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Jon Denton

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Running Head: The Effects ...

SP013928

Social judgments based on language do exist, and are of particular importance in the public schools. Teachers should be aware of the possible effects these judgments may have on teacher-learner interaction. The elements essential to the causes and effects these judgments may have, are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Theoretical considerations

Teachers, like all humans, tend to judge others and this judgment affects their interaction patterns. Factors influencing judgment and expectations of others include race (Gay, 1975; Karlins, Coffman, Walters, 1969), socio-economic status (Holt, 1969), and language (Gumperz, Hernandez, 1972; Kess, 1976; Labov, 1966). One particular language form, learners' use of non-standard dialect has been specifically linked to expectations held by teachers regarding their charges' abilities (Choy, Dodd, 1976; Guskin 1971). Shuy, Wolfram and Riley (1967) report that teachers often have distorted views about the nature of language used by non-standard speakers, such as, non-standard speakers often have very limited vocabularies, (approximately 100 functional words), and tend to utter single words rather than complete sentences.

Along with communication, a second and often unconscious use of language is that of a social indicator. The social image a person projects is due in no small part to the language s/he uses. This image effect of dialect appears to be a significant factor in classroom learning. Teacher expectations of learners may be detrimental to the instructional experience of learners if the children's language varies considerably from that of the teacher. Ironically, these differences in language patterns most often occur with minority and/or low socioeconomic learners. In these instances,

teacher expectations often are based on language, ethnicity, or their interaction rather than the actual academic performance of learners.

Linguists have emphasized the need for the inclusion of an orientation to sociolinguistics in teacher preparation programs to counter the inclination to form negative expectations of learners based on their language patterns (Cannon, 1973; Troike, 1976). Sociolinguistic topics recommended for teaching candidates include; dialect emphasizing differences not deficiencies, language variations resulting from social and cultural forces, standard English as a supplement not a replacement language form.

Given these positions, and the desire to improve our teacher preparation program, an investigation was fashioned to address the following research questions.

1. Do teacher candidates expect different academic behavior from learners on the bases of learner dialect and ethnicity?
2. Does an introduction to sociolinguistics affect teacher candidate expectancy of a learner's academic behavior?
3. Do dialect, ethnicity and an introduction to sociolinguistics interact to influence teacher candidate expectancy of a learner's academic behavior?

Method

subject: This investigation was conducted under the auspices of an educational curriculum and instruction department at a Land Grant university in the Southwest. Eighty-one secondary level teaching candidates (junior and senior classification) enrolled in a generic methods course during the 1978 Spring term constituted the sample. The ethnic composition of the sample was: 95% Anglo, 3% Mexican-American, 1% Black, 1% Oriental. Although the subjects were randomly assigned to either an experimental group (n=40) or control group (n=41) the source and composition of this sample were not necessarily representative of teacher preparation programs

found elsewhere. Thus, care should be exercised in generalizing the results of this investigation to other settings and teacher preparation programs.

treatment: An illustration of the design for this investigation is presented in figure 1. The posttest (T) in this case, served to provide perceptions of the teaching candidates regarding the academic behavior of junior high learners. The treatment (X) provided an introduction to sociolinguistics via a videotaped presentation and a structured discussion.

Groups	Treatment	Posttest
(R) Experimental	X	T
(R) Control		T

Experimental Design

figure 1

More specifically, the videotaped presentation was a 35 minute lecture on sociolinguistics. Among the generalizations included in this lecture were:

- Linguistics is defined as the study of language.
- Good grammar is often thought to be associated with moral good.
- The rules of grammar were arbitarily imposed on English, these rules were not divinely inspired or innately good.
- Language has historically been associated with social prestige and serves as a social marker.
- Society is ethnocentric about the language it uses.
- Regional dialects are forms of standard English. People usually feel their dialect patterns are superior and hold strong attitudes toward different dialects and non-standard dialects.
- Dialect usage is not correct or incorrect, what matters is the appropriateness of the language for the occasion.
- All dialects have a vocabulary, a grammar and a sound system, thus dialects are equivalent in their potential for communication.
- For social reasons, learners should be introduced to Standard English. They should be helped to hear dialect differences and to learn standard English.

Following the videotape presentation, the experimental group candidates engaged in a structured discussion of the presentation. All candidates were encouraged to participate in the discussion through the use of direct and probing questions. Representative discussion questions posed for the group included:

1. Why are the terms "good" and "bad" grammar meaningless?
2. Can we say that language is a social marker? Why?
3. Is any dialect superior to any other?
4. How do we determine if the language used in a situation is appropriate?

Teaching candidates assigned to the control group proceeded with regular class activities with the course instructor while the treatment was being administered to the experimental group. However, once the posttest data had been collected, the aforementioned treatment was also presented to the control group candidates.

Data collection: The function of the posttest was to provide teaching candidate perceptions of the academic behavior of selected learners. In order to satisfy this function, all candidates, regardless of group assignment, completed a biographic data sheet, listened to an introduction of a videotaped discussion, and viewed a videotaped discussion between a teacher and six learners. Following the videotaped discussion, candidates completed an evaluation form on each of the six learners observed in the videotaped presentation. This entire sequence required 35 minutes.

The videotape, which provided the background information for the collection of data relevant to the dependent variable, contained an interaction between 6 seventh grade male students and a teacher. These learners were comparable in IQ (scores ranged from 100 to 115) and all had "B" averages in seventh grade language arts. However, these young

men represented 3 ethnic groups, Black, Mexican-American, and Anglo, with 2 learners belonging to each classification. One learner from each ethnic group was designated as a speaker of standard English and the other learner of similar ethnic background was designated as a non-standard English speaker. These learners were classified and validated as non-standard speakers if they consistently employed features of non-standard dialect described by Labov (1967), McDavid (1967), and Troike (1976). The validation process consisted of a panel of graduate students, with specializations in sociolinguistics and dialectology, classifying the learners into either standard or non-standard speaker categories. Members of the panel working separately classified the six learners with complete agreement into the two categories of dialect.

The sequence of the videotaped interaction was designed to elicit continuous speech in a semi-formal style. Learners were encouraged to engage in conversation about school, free time activities, pets, movies, and their families. The learners were taped as a group to approximate an actual classroom situation, where learners of various ethnic backgrounds and dialect varieties typically occur. The teacher used each learner's name frequently and the boys wore tags to aid the viewers with identification.

As noted earlier, participants completed an evaluation form (figure 2) for each learner, after viewing the videotaped interaction.

Directions: USING THE CODE BELOW, CIRCLE THE ABILITY LEVEL FOR EACH INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITY THAT YOU FEEL IS APPROPRIATE FOR THE STUDENT.

Learners Name_____

Ability Level Code

1 = remedial class
2 = below average class
3 = average class
4 = above average class
5 = gifted class

Instructional Activity	Ability Level
A. Delivering A Speech	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
B. Outlining A Reading Selection	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
C. Answering An Essay Test Item	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
D. Paraphrasing A Reading Selection	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
E. Writing A Paragraph	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
F. Recognizing Cause-Effect Relationships	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
G. Answering Higher Order Questions Orally	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
H. Identifying Main Ideas From Readings	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
I. Reading A Selection Orally	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5
J. Participating In a Debate	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

Evaluation Scale for Rating Academic Behavior of Six Learners

Figure 2

Analysis of data gatered from a pilot test indicated the evaluation form had an acceptable internal consistency, i.e., Cronbach alpha of .87, and thus was satisfactory for collecting the dependent variable data for the investigation.

Analysis

Responses to each item on the evaluation from were summed to provide each teaching candidate's expectancy regarding the academic behavior of each learner. These values were treated as the dependent variable in the

corresponding analyses for all three research questions. The independent variables for research questions 1, 2 and 3 were learner dialect, learner ethnicity, the introduction to sociolinguistics treatment and their respective interactions. Given these variables and the design of the investigation, the expectancy scores were analyzed with a 3x2x2 factorial analysis of variance procedure. Mean values for candidate expectancy of learner academic behavior based on the treatment, learner ethnicity, and learner dialect are presented in table 1.

Table 1

Mean Scores of Teacher Candidate Expectancy for Learners' Academic Behavior Based on Learner Dialect, Learner Ethnicity and Treatment

Independent Variables	Mean Scores
Treatment	
Experimental	31.10
Control	29.40
Dialect	
Standard	30.83
Non-standard	29.65
Ethnicity	
Black	31.12
Anglo	30.19
Mexican-American	29.41

The analysis of variance procedure yielded significant F values for each of the independent variables. Expectancy of academic behavior was significantly influenced by both learner ethnicity ($F=4.19$, $p=.016$) and learner dialect ($F=5.85$, $p=.016$) enabling the investigators to answer the initial research question in the affirmative. The corresponding F

test related to research question 2, was also significant ($F=12.25$, $p<.01$) indicating the treatment did influence subject expectancy of learner academic performance.

Ancillary analyses were conducted to determine the variance attributed to each independent variable with an ω^2 procedure (McNamara, 1978). This procedure revealed that the respective variables, learner ethnicity, learner dialect, and the treatment, accounted for 7.17%, 7.93%, and 8.06% of the variance in the dependent variable.

These results indicate dialect, ethnicity and the treatment influence teacher candidate perceptions of learner academic performance. As noted in table 1, standard speakers and Black learners, were rated higher than their counterparts, while teaching candidates experiencing the treatment held higher expectations of the learners than those candidates who served as controls.

Table 2

Mean Scores for Teacher Candidate Expectancy of Learners' Academic Behavior Classified by Learner Dialect and Learner Ethnicity.

Dialect and Ethnic Classification	Group Means Experimental Group	Control Group
Standard Anglo	31.03	29.15
Non-standard Anglo	30.03	27.49
Standard Black	35.63	34.05
Non-standard Black	28.02	26.80
Standard Mexican-American	27.85	27.32
Non-standard Mexican-American	34.03	31.61

Mean Values for the various interactions suggested by research question 3 are presented in table 2. The interaction of learner dialect and learner ethnicity was determined to have a significant effect ($F=56.56$, $p>.01$) on candidate expectancy of learner academic behavior. This finding apparently

occurred because of the higher perceived academic behavior of the Non-standard Mexican-American speaking learner than his counterpart, the standard speaking Mexican-American learner. Tests of significance for the remaining interactions were not significant, i.e., treatment x learner dialect (F=.58), and treatment x learner ethnicity (F=.28), treatment x learner dialect (F-.58), and treatment x learner ethnicity x learner dialect (F=.44). Taken together, these results do not support an affirmative response to research question 3. A summary of the various tests of significance are provided in table 3.

Table 3

Summary of the Analysis of the Effects of Treatment, Ethnicity, Dialect and their Interaction on Teacher Candidate Expectancy of Learners' Academic Behavior

Independent Variables and Interactions	DF	SS	F	P
Treatment	1	350.07	12.25	.0005
Ethnicity	2	239.12	4.19	.0158
Dialect	1	167.13	5.85	.0160
Treatment x Ethnicity	2	15.90	0.28	.7572
Treatment x Dialect	1	16.48	0.58	.4480
Ethnicity x Dialect	2	3231.59	56.56	.0001
Treatment x Ethnicity x Dialect	2	24.89	0.44	.6471

Note: N= 81, $\bar{X}$ = 30.24, s = 5.34

Discussion

Research has been reported on the effect of teacher expectancy and the influence of learner dialect and learner ethnicity on this expectancy. Ethnicity of learners had a marked effect on teacher candidate expectancy of learners' academic behavior in this investigation. Support for this

finding is found in the literature (Gay, 1975; Karlins, Coffman, Walters, 1969). Certain attitudes are often associated with ethnic groups, for example, value placed on formal education, and initiative. These stereotype attitudes often result in expectancies regarding behavior patterns generalizing to the entire ethnic group. Since 95% of the subjects were Anglo, it is somewhat surprising the Black-learners received the highest rankings. One conjecture is that other components of the teacher preparation program have sensitized the candidates to Black learners and their classroom behaviors.

The results of this investigation also indicate standard dialect has a significant effect on teaching candidate expectancy of learners' academic behavior. Literature examining teacher expectancy (Choy, Dodd, 1976; Guskin, 1971; Shuy, Wolfram, Riley. 1967) and attitudes toward dialects (Cannon, 1973; Labov, 1966) support these results. These findings indicate that teaching candidates expect learners who speak standard English to perform better academically than learners who use non-standard English. Speaking from a linguistic point of view, this idea is incorrect; however with social judgment being a prevailing reality, even though a learner's nonstandard language is communicative, s/he may be hindered because of it.

The treatment in this investigation introduced teaching candidates to selected principles of sociolinguistics. The theme of this treatment was that language prejudices are socially based and while dialect forms may be different, these dialects are functional for communication. Linguists (Cannon, 1973; Troike, 1976) have encouraged teacher educators to include the study of dialect and the social effects of dialect in their programs. The results of this investigation, especially the significant effect of the treatment on teacher expectancy, certainly lends support for this

recommendation.

The only interaction among variables yielding a significant finding was the dialect x ethnicity case. Dialect is often associated with ethnicity. However, an individual's membership in a particular ethnic group does not necessarily mean the person speaks an ethnic dialect. Stereotypes associated with dialect and ethnicity often override reality. For example, we often expect to hear non-standard dialect from a foreign speaker, and when this is not the case we perceive the speaker to be non-standard regardless of her/his language pattern. The interaction effect observed in this investigation may have resulted because the teaching candidates evaluated the learners on the basis of their ethnicity, rather than the language patterns used by the individuals. Further, it is hypothesized that other components of the teaching candidate's preparation may have sensitized them to the characteristics of Black learners while not addressing the language patterns of other learners.

In closing, Carl Sandburg in Useless Words (1950) summarizes the effect language differences can have on relationships:

> So long as we speak the same language and never understand each other,
> So long as the spirals of our words snarl and interlock
> And clutch each other with irreckonable gutturals,
> Well .... (p. 393)

The sources of these language differences, we conclude, are often based on biases held toward the ethnicity and the dialect used by the speaker. Instruction which addresses these language differences from a different not deficient perspective stands to improve communication and enhance learning.

References

Cannon, G. Multidialects: The student's right to his own language. Collect Composition and Communication, Dec. 1973, 382-385.

Choy, S. J., & Dodd, D. Standard English-speaking and nonstandard-Hawaiian-English-speaking children: Comprehension of both dialects and teacher's evaluations. Journal of Educational Psychology, 1976, 68, 184-193.

Gay, G. Teachers' achievement expectations of and classroom interactions with ethnically different students. Contemporary Education, 1975, 46, 166-172.

Gumperz, J. J., & Hernandez, C. Bilingualish-Bidialectism and classroom interaction. In C.B. Cazden, V. P. John, & D. Hymes (Eds.), Functions of language in the classroom. New York: Teachers College Press, 1972.

Guskin, J. T. The social perception of language variation: Black and white teachers' attitudes toward speakers from different racial and social class background (Doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, 1971). (University Microfilms No. 71-4619).

Holt, J. C. The underachieving school. New York: Pitman Publishing Corporation, 1969.

Karlins, M., Coffman, T., & Walters, G. On the fading of social stereotypes: Studies in three generations of college students. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1969, 39, 1-16.

Kess, J. F. Psycholinguistics: Introductory perspectives. New York: Academic Press, 1976.

Labov, W. The social stratification of English in New York City. Washington, D. C.: Center for Applied Linguistics, 1966.

Labov, W., & Cohen, P. Systematic relations of standard and non-standard rules in the grammars of Negro speakers. Project Literacy Reports No. 8. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, 1967.

McDavid, R. K., Jr. A checklist of significant features for discriminating social dialects. In E. L. Everets (Ed.), Dimensions of dialects. Champaign, Illinois: National Council of Teachers of English, 1967.

McNamara, J. F. Practical significance and statistical models. Educational Administration Quarterly, Winter 1978, 14, 39-51.

Sandburg, C. Complete poems. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1950.

Shuy, R. W., Wolfram, W. A., & Riley, W. K. Linguistic correlates of social stratification in Detroit speech. Michigan State University: Cooperative Research Project No. 6-1347, 1967.

Troike, R. C. Receptive bidialectalism: Implications for second-sialect teaching. In N. A. Johnson (Ed.), Current topics in language. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Winthrop Publishing Company, 1976.